



CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ALLIANCE

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California State Regulatory Agencies Must Improve on Environmental Justice *EJ Advocates Assess Nine Agencies and Highlight Four Agencies to Watch*

Sacramento, CA | May 15, 2019 — On the heels of the release of Governor Newsom’s revised state budget proposal, today the Capitol received an advance look at a new report assessing how well California’s state regulatory agencies engage, respond, and implement environmental policies and programs in low-income communities and communities of color.

The [California Environmental Justice Alliance](#) (CEJA) released an early “Learnings and Recommendations” executive summary ahead of its forthcoming Environmental Justice Agency Assessment for 2018 to provide state regulatory agencies with an immediate resource to shift and deepen engagement around environmental justice. [Download the executive summary here.](#)

“It is vitally important that we have accountability tools to ensure state agencies meet their critical mandates to protect the health, safety, and well being of all Californians. CEJA’s Environmental Justice Agency Assessment shows how most agencies are failing to meet even the most basic environmental justice principles such as meaningful community engagement. We hope this tool will encourage all state agencies to improve their commitment to and integration of EJ principles in all their program areas and within policy implementation.”

— **Gladys Limón, Executive Director, California Environmental Justice Alliance**

The actions of our state regulatory agencies are ultimately a reflection of the Governor’s priorities, as agencies fall under Newsom’s executive administration and leadership. Using eight principles of environmental justice, the report assesses how well the agencies’ actions conformed with each of the principles. These assessments are made in the spirit of charting a course to improving agency actions, with the ultimate goal of improving conditions that negatively impact our communities, particularly those disproportionately impacted by environmental harms and least enjoy environmental benefits and protections. This executive summary and full report will guide both agencies and advocates on areas of improvement for stronger partnerships.

Of the nine state agencies assessed in the report, some agencies show more meaningful engagement than others, evident by demonstrated integration of community expertise into their policy development and implementation. By engaging with local residents and using that input to shape our state policy, California regulatory agencies can ensure that environmental burdens are reduced and benefits are shared.

CEJA members and partners from across the state responded to the report, highlighting key challenges at several agencies assessed and opportunities with some current legislative priorities:

“The California Air Resources Board must be determined to implement bold rule-making for their suite of Mobile Source Measures that provides long-term and zero-emissions solutions. It is imperative they prioritize community health to address the substandard air across the state that poses an extreme threat for thousands living with asthma and other respiratory issues. It’s with great urgency for CARB to exercise robust authority over air districts on pollution reduction measures, such as the Community Air Protection

Program (AB 617) and be staunch on the regulatory front in supporting the most ambitious timelines and standards for emission reduction measures and Facility Based Mobile Source Measures like the Indirect Source Rule.”

— **Andrea Vidaurre, Policy Analyst, Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice**

“Despite years of public and legislative scrutiny, the Department of Toxic Substances Control remains an agency in crisis. DTSC’s well-documented failures to protect the public from toxic harm have done little to change department policies, practice, and behavior that shroud the agency in secrecy and exclude the public from decision-making processes. They refuse to meaningfully respond to comments, concerns and questions. It’s a pattern we’ve seen with cleanup sites, public meetings, implementation of statutes, rule changes, and enforcement. Unless we work to reform DTSC through policies like AB 1357— where communities can make themselves be heard and demand answers—California families will continue to be unknowingly poisoned by toxic contaminants where they live, work, and go to school.”

— **Michael Rincon, Policy Researcher, Physicians for Social Responsibility - Los Angeles**

“The California Division of Oil, Gas, and Geothermal Resources needs to accept its obligations to protect the public against adverse impacts of drilling and fracking instead of operating as an extension of the oil and gas industry. California cannot continue to issue thousands of new drilling permits each year. Dirty oil extraction fuels climate change and endangers the millions of Californians who live, work or go to school next to toxic drilling operations. Frontline communities deserve and demand more.”

— **Alvaro Casanova, Senior Policy Advocate, Center on Race, Poverty & the Environment**

“From the governor’s office to the legislature to the communities that are most threatened, there is surging momentum to pass a safe, affordable drinking water fund. We welcome the support from the California Water Resources Control Board to get this fund established this year and its commitment to implement it effectively once secured. Our water crisis still affects more than one million people in every corner of California, and is particularly devastating to communities of color.”

— **Michael K. Claiborne Senior Attorney, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability**

CEJA’s full 2018 Environmental Justice Agency Assessment will be released on June 20th.

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California Environmental Justice Alliance is a statewide, community-led alliance that works to achieve environmental justice by advancing policy solutions. We unite the powerful local organizing of our members in the communities most impacted by environmental hazards – low-income communities and communities of color – to create comprehensive opportunities for change at a statewide level. We build the power of communities across California to create policies that will alleviate poverty and pollution. Together, we are growing the statewide movement for environmental health and social justice.

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